



LINCOLN CHAFEE

U.S. SENATOR

RHODE ISLAND

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CHAFEE SECURES \$1.6 MILLION FOR BLACKSTONE VALLEY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee today announced that the Blackstone Heritage Corridor will receive \$1.622 million in funding for fiscal year 2006. Appropriated as part of the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, the funding will allow the important work currently underway in the corridor to proceed. The award will be used to fund operations of the Blackstone Corridor Commission, technical assistance, and construction projects. Senator Chafee secured the Blackstone funding in addition to \$4.772 million in other requests for Rhode Island.

“The Blackstone Heritage Corridor brings recognition to the national and historical significance of the Blackstone region as the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. Spanning across two states and encompassing twenty-four communities and half a million people, the Corridor represents a unique partnership between the National Park Service, the states of Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and local communities,” Senator Chafee said. “This funding will strengthen those partnerships, and enable these groups to work with the Heritage Commission to continue to carry forward the vision of preserving the riverway, expanding and protecting community and landscape character, while encouraging tourism and heritage-based economic development.”

Of the award, approximately \$800,000 will be devoted to the operations of the Blackstone Corridor Commission, which is charged with its oversight. This funding will support Commission operations for administration and project development. The Commission is composed of federally-appointed stated and local representatives, and works with the National Park Service (NPS) to carry out the mission of preserving and interpreting the unique resources and qualities of the Blackstone Valley.

Throughout its existence, the Commission has forged strong partnerships with local governments, private investors, and community stakeholders, resulting in over \$300

million in private investments for heritage-related projects. The Commission has brought communities together to realize the common goals of neighborhood revitalization, historic and economic restoration, and an improved environment. During 2004, several riverfront projects moved forward in the Corridor, including development of a river access and portage system; design of a Northern Gateway Visitor Center; and the continued evolution of the Blackstone River Bikeway with six continuous miles completed in Lincoln/Cumberland.

An additional \$322,000 will be allocated through the NPS to the Corridor's technical assistance account. The funds will enable the NPS to provide technical specialists in historic preservation, planning and design, as well as National Park Rangers.

Finally, the remaining \$500,000 will be used to supplement the Blackstone Corridor's Development/Construction account. These funds are critical for implementing the Commission's Management Plan, which drives the primary restoration activities in the Corridor, including visitor center and museum development, the preservation of the region's historic buildings, the construction of the comprehensive river access network as well as support for the Blackstone Bikeway and environmental restoration activities.

"Today, visible signs of change are evident throughout the Blackstone Corridor – historic mill buildings have been restored; cities and towns have rediscovered their river communities; and a sense of ownership and pride has returned to the region. Many current and future challenges remain for the Blackstone Corridor Commission and its partners as they work with local communities to complete ongoing regional projects, restore historical structures, and enhance the river environment. These federal funds will provide the resources necessary to preserve the beauty and cultural values of this nationally significant region," Chafee continued.

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